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NARRATOR J. V. Crawford

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE San Lucas Ranch  
Santa Ynez Valley

DATE March 5, 1986

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Interview with J.V. Crawford  
Date of interview: March 5, 1986, San Lucas Ranch, S.Y.V.  
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz  
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL:       Introductaion

Mr. C: A little bit about my grandparents, John V. Vickers moved from Illinois in the late 1880's to Tombstone, Arizona and put together the well know Chiricahua Cattle Company, out about 490 miles from Tombstone, in the Silver Springs Valley, where they had large acreage. They loved Tombstone and my mother was raised there until she was 14 years old. Grandfather Vickers was County Treasurer of Cochise County which was the county seat and he was a territory legislator of Arizona. My father was born in Dayton, Washington, his father, later Judge Crawford, was an attorney in La Grand, Oregon. Dad went to Stanford University but due to his father's poor health and pressing work he quit college in his senior year and went back to help out his father. Although Dad was born in Washington State, he became an Oregonian. Dad came to San Francisco being asked to come down to help clean up an insurance company that was in serious trouble and Dad being a lawyer they thought he would be useful and he was admitted to practice law in California although in those days it was probably a little easier to get (pass the bar exams), even though he had not graduated from Stanford. He



and a partner put together an insurance company after cleaning up the original one and thats how he got into the insurance business. The company was Swett and Crawford, the biggest insurance company west of the Mississippi. His partner being Mr. ? Swett. My mother was raised as I said in Tombstone, Arizona, then came to California about the turn of the century and settled at 624 W. 28th Street in Los Angeles, which is now a sorority house at U.S.C. I was born on Jan. 17, 1907 which makes me a pretty old goat! I was born on 30th Street, a half block off Figueroa Blvd.

PL: What do you remember about your parents?

were both very fine people, Father came from Democratic stock with Arkanas roots to Oregon. Mother came from Republican stock in Pennsylvania in fact her ancestors ran an underground railroad as a slave station. They were both very fine, lived in Los Angeles for many years. Mother's name was Ann Vickers, and my father was Clarence Harrison Crawford.

Mother quit college in the middle of her senior to be married. They lived from about 1929 onward in ? Hills. Mother bought the San Lucas Ranch in 1927 which was two years before I graduated from Stanford in 1929 so for the first two years that we owned the ranch I was here only during summers but after that I



have been here all the time except for certain military duty.

PL: Tell me about your schooling?

Mr. C: I graduated from Stanford in 1929 with a major in Military Science and Tactics. Then I worked on the ranch for two years then decided there were a few things I needed in Agriculture and as Stanford did not have Agriculture courses I went to Oregon State, and took a semester up there and studied Veterinary Medicine, judging, management, and business law and I have been here ever since with no further education.

PL: When did you first come to the Santa Ynez Valley?

Mr. C: In 1927 when Mother bought the ranch (San Lucas Ranch). She liked the valley very much. We had driven through here on many occasions, in fact she was more than a little annoyed with me when I got my final class at Stanford and instead of staying for Senior Week, the ball and all, I got in my car and came down to the ranch, she jumped on me for not getting my diploma and I said, "Well, Mother, they will mail it to me," I had not interest in putting on a cap and gown.

PL: Can you tell me something about the history of the San Lucas Ranch?

Mrt. C: I can't go very far back, we took it over in 1927 and before that a fellow named Frank Walker had it and if the far past it was part of a Spanish (Mexican) Land



Grant, Las Lomas de Purificacion. The westerly half of the ranch was purchased by J.J. Mitchell and he named his part, the Juan y Lolita because his wife was Lolita Armour.

PL: How many acres did your mother buy?

Mr. C: 7,000 acres and then we added some more from the Petroleum Securities, over toward Santa Ynez and I bought some more across the river here and so the ranch today is approximately 10,000 acres of which half is brush upon the countains and ralativaely of little value. The balance is mostly pasture and so it is about 300 acres of tillable land. We grow alfalfa , oats once ia awhile, we have tried sugar beets and tomatoes, and we used to go on feeding here, cattle feeding and we grow alot of sweet sorgum called honey sorgum, we had three silos, I remember very well filling those silos, chopping silage. Those silos were there for many years, they had been built in 1927 or 8. The silos were built by Hans Skytt of Solvang and were made of redwood but even those don't last forever. First there were 3, then 2, then 1, and now they are all gone. I'm sure there are other people who can tell you more about the history of the ranch than I, someone like Walker Tomplins.

PL: Do you recall any of the pioneers of the valley?

Mr. C: Harvey McDonald who operated the Mitchell Ranch for



many years and was a close friend of mine, and his wife, Gail. I remember Marcus Sanchez, he lived over on the Armour Ranch, had four sons, Augustine, Tony, Clayton, and one other. The Armour Ranch at one time was managed by Mr. Barrett and he had a couple of sons. There have been som many propety changes in Santa Ynez that it is hard to keep tack of who owns what. Some of the boys who have worked for me, two were the Pico boys, Ed and Luie. This was before the war (W.W. II) Their father was Spanish and had the ranch on top of Refugio Pass that is now owned by Ronald Reagan. One day before the war the Pico boys asked me if I would go up and meet their father and I did, he was a very fine old gentleman, and is now long gone. The ranch had other owners, Flornoy, and Ray Cornelius before Reagan bought it. In addition to the Pico boys, Andres worked for me as a cowboy and I left him in charge when I went off to war. Then after the war he left and Link Wilson took over as foreman. The present foreman is Gene Mathews who worked for Link as a cowboy, Gene has been foreman for 7 or 8 years.

PL: Have you started any special projects here on the ranch that have proved successful?

Mr. C: One project that was not too successful was that I spent 30 years breeding up a beautiful herd of Hereford cattle and we got them a little too highly



bred and they did not have enough milk and we were getting sickly calves which means that they do not mature and grow, so on the advice of a very good friend of mine, a veterinarian, that used to work up at Chico (California) where I operated three ranches, we started doing a little cross breeding, first with Shorthorns which is a dual purpose animal, a good beef animal and has a good supply of milk and then we have used several other breeds so we now have some Beef Masters and the herd is not pretty Herfords anymore, although I did buy about 50 head from H.H. Davis of the Zaca Ranch, who has been in the valley slightly longer than I have. They are pretty nice looking animals and are mostly red which came originally from the King Ranch in Texas. The Beef Master is a cross bred and has a bit of the Indian cattle in them. We did raised hogs before the war. I was the second biggest hog raiser in the county at that time. and consequently when FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) was president and Henry Wallace was Sec. of Agriculture, they started the corn-hog program and also some subsidies which I never liked and I madae so much noise about that the next year I was not on the county hog committee. They did not want me on there because they knew what I thought of the whole program.

PL: What were they trying to do?



Mr. C: Trying to reduce the hog production, well...they gave people a bonus of something dollar wise, I forget just what amount, to reduce their herd by 10 %. Well, I had sense enough by then to reduce my herd, my 50 sows by 10 % because of the market situation so we got a nice cheque for doing nothing. Absolutely, it was a pretty silly project. They sent a lot of pigs down to the river and drown them in Mississippi, to get rid of them and this was nationwide. Supply and demand was going to take care of it as far as I was concerned. We have been through many ups and downs in the cattle business. I have fattened cattle here years ago and sold that cattle for 5 cents a pound, steers, now they are probably 60 cents a pound.

PL: You have a landing field on the ranch, do you fly?

Mr. C: Yes, I built that field, I marked out a strip and built the hanger in 1937 which was the year I got my license to fly, and I bought an airplane and it was there until World War II started and I got in my brown suit and sold the plane to the government. I also have a single, multi, and helicopter license. For years I commuted by plane to Northern California. The plane in the hanger now belongs to John. D. Robertson an insurance man from Santa Barbara. I had an other little one that I bought, a 172, and put a bigger engine in it and sold that to a man, but it is



still in the little green hanger. I take a physical every two years and do a little flying. You are supposed to take a biannual check flight, I don't fly any distances anymore after flying for nearly 50 years I hate to hang it up but I think it makes sense. We had to sell our Northern California ranches to pay inheritance taxes when Mother and Father died in 1967 and 1966. I flew my old Waco before the war twice to New York, its a long way and if you are a single pilot it is better to go commercial. I've flown all over the western states.

PL: Can I ask you about your war experiences?

Mr. C: That doesn't have much to do with the Valley but after Pearl Harbor, about January I got orders to report to Camp San Luis Obispo to the military police battalion of which I knew very little. I went up and reported in and was put in charge of Transportation. I didn't stay there very long as we were shipped to Tanforan Race Track in Albany, which had become a Japanese Concentration Camp. This was largely for their own protection because there was a lot of hysteria on the coast after Pearl Harbor. They (the Japanese) were reasonably happy to stay there where they had protection. I was sent with six men to Bakersfield to start a military company in aviation. So I was on that list. I put that together and built it up to over 300 men, and in addition to that



I was in charge of military police in the San Joaquin. I put in 14 months there as Provost Marshal. Then I was sent to Salt Lake City to be sent overseas, but instead I went to Texas as Executive Officer for the 30th Squadron, 19th Group down in El Paso, Texas. It was called Rattlesnake Bomber Base for the B 17 trainer station. The 19th Group was shot out in the Philippines at Clark Field. Then I went back to Salt Lake and to Virginia to board an Liberty Ship full of ammunition and we landed in Naples. I spent ten days there and then went to Bari (?) where I turned in my troops and I assigned to a service group at San Savara (?) which is near Foggia (?), they had already been alerted to the China-Burma Theater so we got on a transport from Toronto and got to Port Said near Suez, the canal was closed. We went to Bombay on a boat, then to a jungle camp near Calcutta, on to Hong Kong and to China. My first job was as base commander for a little fighter base. There were two commands in those days on the base, the base commander which I had and a drill keeper, and then the Tactical Command that was in charge of flying the airplanes. So I had that for about 2 months when I got a call to go to the B 29 base. There was a 2nd LT. in charge there and he was not getting along, so they sent me in. I was there for 5 months. Then I contracted malaria



that was complicated with yellow jandice, hepatitis and was in the hospital for 7 weeks. Finally they gave me a service squadron, the 338 and thats why my post box number in Santa Ynez is 338. One day at the post offive the Postmaster told me I needed a larger post box, and I could choosefrom three number and one of those numbers was 338, so I took that one. The 338 Squadron was my command in China.

PL: What were the years that you were overseas?

Mr. C: 1943 to 1945.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

PL: You told me that you were sent home sooner that you wanted because your father was ill?

Mr. C: Yes, he had a very bad bleeding ulcer. It was a worry and he needed help. We were operating three ranches in northern California at the time and bought another one year after I got back (from overseas) which I was not in favor of, as it was hard work and I did it for over 30 years.

My mother died in 1966 and my father died in 1967, Mother was 84 and Dad was 88. Their home was in Los Angeles and my home was here. Mother had the big house here that she had built as a weekender.



Consequently it does not have sufficient space for full time living and right now the heater system is out. Mother loved this place, I remember very well when the built Cachuma Dam which is right back of my house here, she had tears because it was not good for our view up the valley. I expect to spend my few remaining years here. I think the Santa Ynez Valley is tops and I have been fortunate to have covered a good part of the world.

When I separated from the service I had what I considered a great honor, I was asked to remain in the service as a Major and go to Europe with the Army of Occupation, my wife, Frances wanted to go very badly because we loved being with the French and we knew a fair amount of French and it would have been great to travel but I could not do it on account of my parents needing me here.

PL: Tell me about your experiences with Los Rancheros Visitadores?

Mr. C: I am the last surviving charter member. The reason for that is quite simple, they were older me, Harvey (McDonald), Jack Mitchell, Elmer Aul, when they passed away they were in their eighties. Joe Paxton was well over 80. They were all good friends of mine and I'm very sorry to lose them. Jack Mitchell was the instigator of the Rancheros, it was the tradition of the visiting ranchers in Spanish days. The



Rancheros Visitadores started in 1930 I believe and I went on one of the first two rides. We all had quarters in the big barn on the Mitchell ranch. It was a very nice organization, lots of local people, Ted Chamberlain, Tubby Davis. Then they started enlarging the membership and split them up into camps so I have lost a great deal of interest in it since it became so big. Taking in everyone across the U.S. such as bankers, etc, I liked it in the old days. I made every trek before the war but I haven't made a full ride since. I do go up for a day or for lunch or dinner but for me I have ridden up and down this river bed for 58 years. I like the Los Alamos Society that we call the 49ers better and to get into that society you have to live north of the mountain and south of San Luis and have sizable acreage.

PL: Did Cachuma Dam take any of your land?

Mr. C: Yes, I think a total of 300 to 400 acres and they tried to get more. They could only justify what they needed for the dam. They did not take what is now my Cachuma Village. There are 24 houses and some shops and offices down there for the construction crews and we tried to get a first refusal or a buy out, but no, there would never be surplus for the government and then I believe in 1956 they turned it over to the General Services Administration and they immediately declared it surplus. It is only 1400 feet from my



back door. I found out what some people wanted to do with it, they wanted to put in a nightly resort and store and I said, No Way! We could not have kept hunter and fishermen off the ranch if that had happened. That property they wanted I bought to protect myself. I didn't want to be a landlord but I guess I am. We have some good people down in the village and it's working out very nicely. Mr. Wilford is the manager.

PL: I see that you belong to the County Sheriff Air Patrol?

Mr. C: Yes, I started with them years ago and have flown with them for years. We have a barbecue for all the members here every year. I don't fly active missions as I used to. It strictly started out as a search and rescue now they do drug surveillance for marijuana and I haven't gotten mixed up with that, and I will not fly prisoners in my small plane.

PL: Do you commute between the ranch and Hope Ranch?

Mr. C: Yes, at the moment except during deer season and we ride deer season very hard, we have never allowed deer hunting here on the ranch. There are a lot of people who believe that I keep the deer for my hunting friends which is all wrong. We get good cooperation from the Fish And Game people, it is expensive to patrol the land to keep the hunters out. Lots of times I have counted 15 or so around the



house.

PL: It has been a good life for you?

Mr. C: You bet! I wouldnot do anything else.

PL; Thank you Mr. Crawford for the interview.

End of interview

\* I had wanted to ask Mr. Crawford about his holdings on Santa Rosa Island, the Vickers and Vail Co., but he would not talk about that because of litigation over the island and the Chumash people who have gone to court over land rights to the island.